



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **MOUSE TESTS POSITIVE FOR HANTAVIRUS**

### ***County Urges Residents to Use Caution When Cleaning Up Rodent Droppings***

A wild harvest mouse trapped during routine monitoring in Torrey Pines State Park has tested positive for the potentially-deadly hantavirus, San Diego County vector control officials said Tuesday. Twenty-one rodents, including 19 mice, have tested positive for hantavirus this year, compared to 14 in 2009.

Department of Environmental Health Director Jack Miller said infected mice rarely pose a health threat to people if they remain in the wild, but that the disease can become dangerous if infected rodents get indoors and people come into contact with their droppings.

"People contract hantavirus by inhaling dust particles containing the virus from rodent droppings and nesting materials," Miller said. "The best way to prevent the disease is to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds."

Hantavirus is carried by wild rodents, primarily deer mice. When the virus becomes airborne and is inhaled, it can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). HPS begins with symptoms similar to the flu, but in some cases, can lead to severe breathing difficulties and even death. There is no vaccine or specific treatment for hantavirus.

#### **How to Avoid Exposure:**

- Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.
- Avoid rodent infested areas and do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with rodent droppings and urine.
- Clean up rodent droppings and urine using the wet cleaning method described below.

#### **Use "wet-cleaning" methods to prevent inhaling the virus:**

- **DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM INFESTED AREAS.**
- Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup of water) onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding areas and let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning. Clean with a sponge or a mop.
- Place disinfected rodents and debris into two plastic bags, seal them and discard in the trash.
- Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method. Thoroughly wash your bare hands with soap and water.

For more information, contact the County Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 or visit <http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/deh/pests/hantavirus.html>. ###

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